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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASMARA 000317

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [KPKO](#) [ER](#)  
SUBJECT: GSE PNGS UNMEE SENIOR MANAGER

Classified By: AMBASSADOR SCOTT H. DELISI, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (SBU) On March 16, the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) declared persona non grata Senior Manager David Bax of the UN Mission for Eritrea and Ethiopia Mine Action Coordination Committee (UNMEE-MACC). Bax was given four days to depart Eritrea. He left on March 17 for Addis Ababa, where he will continue his work as MACC Senior Manager from the other side of the border.

¶2. (C) Post was unofficially provided a copy of the GSE diplomatic note ordering Mr. Bax's departure. The note cites UNMEE-MACC for &being negligent and violating Eritrean regulations8; &illegal recruitment8; &cars being used to smuggle people out of the country8; and &providing UNMEE ID cards for foreigners who have entered the country for other purposes.8 The GSE also protested two specific cases: UNMEE-MACC's rehiring in Asmara of a former military observer from South Africa who had been previously expelled from Eritrea; and UNMEE-MACC's assistance to Embassy Asmara in the demolition of an armored vehicle in spring 2006 &in the absence of any local authority and without the knowledge and sanctions of senior UNMEE officials.8

¶3. (C) Post notes that the final complaint concerns the Defense Attache's lightly armored vehicle which UNMEE-MACC destroyed in spring 2006. The DATT had sent a letter to General Sebhat, Ministry of Defense, in May 2006 requesting MOD support and guidance in destroying the vehicle. Receiving no response from the MOD to this request, DATT arranged with UNMEE-MACC to destroy the vehicle in line with U.S. regulations. Directly prior to the PNG of Bax, post received a diplomatic note dated March 14 protesting the &illegal transfer and demolishing of the vehicle...in violation of VCDR and the rules and regulations of the country8 and demanding an explanation. Post plans to respond generically to this diplomatic note requesting the MFA to provide the provisions of the Vienna Convention and local law that this violated (if any) and suggesting a meeting to discuss these issues at a future date once L has had a chance to review the GSE response. (Comment: Post has been waiting for over seven weeks for a response to the Ambassador's request to the Presidential Advisor to discuss the provisions of the Vienna Convention which the GSE claims allows them to open our diplomatic pouches. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with them on these issues ) but we

doubt the GSE will follow through on either the car demolition or the pouch issue. End Comment.)

¶4. (C) Comment: While the GSE has had a few legitimate grievances with the UN in the past, we do not believe any of the reasons cited in Bax, case warranted him being declared PNG nor do we believe they reflect the real reasons behind his expulsion. The GSE has, since October, 2005, increasingly restricted and curtailed UNMEE activities in Eritrea, including forcing the removal of all American, European, and Canadian personnel (Bax is a South African national). It has also denied recognition to the acting SRSG (who cannot even enter Eritrea at this point), essentially ensuring that UNMEE,s ability to address substantive policy issues with the GSE is nil.

¶5. We believe that the GSE is also motivated by an intention to curtail further the movement of UNMEE-MACC personnel in the TSZ where they have operated with a reasonable degree of freedom in the past. This may be related to recently observed movements by the Eritrean military in the area where UNMEE-MACC staff have been demining. UNMEE deminers were restricted in the past few weeks from entering previously accessible areas in the TSZ, accused of being spies, and PNG,ing the head of UNMEE will further disrupt and delay their operations. Bax,s expulsion represents yet another nail in the coffin for UNMEE in Eritrea and raises the question of whether any further demining can be done in this country. Given the GSE,s track record with the UN, NGOs and other international entities that have raised GSE ire, UNMEE-MACC is preparing for the worst. UNMEE-MACC has told us that they may start to move their heavy equipment across the border to Ethiopia, in the event that the GSE closes them completely and then tries to appropriate their

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equipment. End Comment.  
DeLisi